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## THE GERMAN STÄDTETAG

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BY LOUIS N. ROBINSON,  
Ithaca, N. Y.

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The methods till lately employed by cities in working out their problems were highly individualistic. Each city did what was right in its own eyes,—with the result that the problems remain still unsolved. But in recent years co-operation among cities has come about and the idea is gaining ground that interchange of facts and experience is as indispensable in city affairs as in other lines of work. In America this idea of co-operation has found expression in various leagues and associations already familiar to readers of this magazine. Of similar organizations in Germany the largest is the German Städtetag, which, since its inception at the City Exposition in Dresden, 1903, has grown with such rapidity that an account of it may be considered timely.

Briefly stated, the German Städtetag is a voluntary union of cities and of associations of cities. Each city of the empire having a population of twenty-five thousand is eligible to membership. Furthermore, associations of smaller cities which together have a population of more than twenty-five thousand are admitted.<sup>1</sup> Membership in the Städtetag carries with it the pledge to pay the membership dues for at least five years. At the end of that time membership may be dropped if proper notification is given. In the meetings of the Städtetag, each city or each separate association of cities has the right to be represented through authorized persons and has, without regard to the number of its inhabitants, at least one vote on all questions. If the population goes beyond the fifty thousand mark, a second vote is given. To a population of two hundred and fifty thousand, three votes are given; to a population of three hundred and fifty thousand, four votes; and so on, an additional vote for each additional hundred thousand. The money necessary to meet the expenses of the Städtetag is raised by an assessment levied on each member in proportion to the number of its inhabitants—a certain sum for each thousand. As a unified body, the Städtetag is represented first of all by an administrative committee of twelve members. These are elected by the Städtetag, and hold office until the next election, which is the last piece of business at each regular meeting. The administrative committee selects from among its members a chairman who is the authorized representative of the administrative committee and of the Städtetag, and is the presiding officer in the meetings of each. There is also a second committee which includes the administrative committee already mentioned and members selected by the Städtetag from various city councils. This second committee can be convoked by the chairman of the administrative committee

<sup>1</sup>Five associations of cities have joined the Städtetag. In these five associations two hundred and seventy-one cities are included. Of the cities having a population of twenty-five thousand or more, one hundred and sixty-nine have become members. The three city states—Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck—have not yet entered the union.

whenever it seems desirable by reason of important matters that a larger number of the cities be represented in the administrative deliberations. The term of office is the same as that for the first committee.

The purpose of the Städtetag is through unified action to care for the welfare of the cities as a whole, and to provide a means whereby the cities through suggestions, advice and example may mutually assist one another. It has two ways of doing this,—by holding regular meetings and by maintaining a central bureau.

From time to time it meets as a body and discusses questions of city policy. Its first meeting was held on November 27, 1905, in Berlin. The administrative committee had previously drawn up a set of resolutions dealing with the meat question. These were thoroughly discussed and almost unanimously adopted. They formed the basis of the petition presented by the administrative committee to the Imperial Chancellor and the Reichstag in November, 1906.<sup>2</sup> It is planned to hold the next meeting in July, 1908, in Munich, with the credit relations of the German cities, especially bonded indebtedness, as the chief subject of discussion.

More important than the meetings of the Städtetag is the central bureau opened on April 1, 1906, in Berlin. The director of this bureau is selected by the administrative committee and must be a man educated in law or in political economy and familiar with city laws and city administration. He is furnished with a staff of helpers and secretaries, and under the oversight of the administrative committee carries on the work pertaining to the office.

The tasks which this central office has undertaken are many. A preliminary step for all its other activities is the creation and maintenance of a special library dealing with city affairs. Designed to be of use in research work, it includes not only books and other publications common to all libraries, but also a variety of material such as schedules, public announcements, copies of important documents and newspaper clippings. Each member of the Städtetag is pledged to furnish free of charge a copy of all its more important printed matter relating in any way to city government or to city life. In addition scientific studies and standard works are purchased directly with money set aside out of the income of the Städtetag.

Not counting some six hundred books and written articles presented by the city exposition of Dresden, the library now includes over a thousand general administrative reports and city budgets, more than eight thousand local laws, tariffs, and service instructions, hundreds of police regulations and city council decrees, historical works and statistical material of all kinds.

The material is grouped according to the following arrangement:

I. (a) Administrative reports.

<sup>2</sup>The prevailing sentiment of the petition and of the resolutions adopted by the Städtetag was that Germany itself is not in a position to furnish a supply of meat adequate to the demands of a rapidly increasing population and that measures should be immediately taken to provide for its importation from other countries. On account of the dissolution of the Reichstag no action was taken and the petition was handed back. The administrative committee decided not to present the petition to the newly elected Reichstag, but to consider the matter further.

- (b) Current bills, municipal journals, reports of sittings.
- (c) Personal information, directories, etc.
- II. Budgets and final accounts.
- III. Local laws, instructions and other administrative papers, important contracts, police measures.
- IV. Statistical material.
- V. Historical works.
- VI. Various publications not to be brought under I, IV, V.

Within each group the material is arranged alphabetically by cities, so that under the name of each city may be found the books or other articles dealing with that special group of the city's activities. All representatives of the cities or of the associations of cities have the right to make use of the library. The director may also grant this privilege to representatives of city boards or to private persons for the purpose of study.

No charge is made except in cases where the collection of voluminous material is demanded. Provision is also made for loaning the material to the parties mentioned, but only in so far as it is not needed at the bureau itself. The aim is to make the library the chief center for the scientific study of city affairs. It is open on weekdays from 9 A. M. to 2 P. M., and offers to the investigator the latest, the best, and the most complete material for study in the activities of German cities that can be found anywhere.

With this library as a source, the central bureau offers to furnish information to the members of the *Städtetag*, to smaller municipalities, to local boards and to private persons. If the desired information requires a considerable amount of work a charge may be made by the director, otherwise the information is furnished without cost. It does not pretend to be able to answer every question that may be asked. In legal questions especially, it attempts only to refer to similar cases, if there have been such in other cities, or to point out the best material bearing on the subject. It is, however, in a position to furnish information on a host of questions likely to perplex the minds of city legislators. If an expression of opinion from other members of the *Städtetag* is desired, the central bureau sends the question around and prepares the answer according to the reports received. This demand for information has two good effects. It may help the seeker over a difficult problem and it makes it possible for the bureau to keep alive to the prevailing situation and to grow in depth and breadth of knowledge. In the first year of the bureau's existence, one hundred and thirty-two requests for information were made, and in forty per cent of these cases charges were made.

Another task the central bureau has set itself is the publication of a journal designed to meet the needs of a larger circle of information seekers. The aim is to digest the material furnished by the municipalities belonging to the *Städtetag*, and to make known through the columns of the journal items of common interest to the cities. Peculiar city arrangements, regulations, administrative rules and decisions of the higher courts in regard to city cases, etc., are noted, and attention is called to new publications likely to be needed by the members of the *Städtetag*. The journal also serves

to make known the decisions and reports of the administrative committee. Each member receives according to its size from ten to sixty copies of the journal, and additional copies may be secured at a small price.<sup>3</sup> It is published at no definite intervals, but according to need, usually every four to six weeks.

Thus in at least one old-world country, the movement toward co-operation among cities has evolved into a fully national institution, but has not overstepped national boundaries, as has, for example, the League of American Municipalities, organized in cities situated some in Canada and some in the United States,—a league, in other respects, perhaps not so well under way as the German one. At a time when the far-sighted are looking to every department of life to furnish threads to bind the South American countries to us, one regrets that this league, or at any rate some one of the numerous analogous associations, has not expanded from North to South America. Another and more informal kind of expansion possible for us is some sort of interchange of information with the German *Städtetag*,—a move which would certainly be agreeable to them.

<sup>3</sup>Private persons may also secure the journal by addressing the director of the central bureau, Am Kölnischen Park 8, Berlin, Germany.